



## UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO FEMALE CONDOMS (UAFC)

This case study focuses on the advocacy component of the Universal Access to Female Condoms (UAFC) programme, which is aimed to increase choice and financial and political support for female condoms amongst donors and implementers. Access to female condoms is far from universal and for a long time there was only one female condom available. Female condoms are also often not included in family planning or HIV programmes. UAFC advocates for more female condoms to enter the international market to give women more choice. The Universal Access to Female Condoms programme has three overall objectives: to ensure available and affordable condoms; to create increased demand for and sustained use of female condoms; and to ensure financial and political support from global and local policy makers, donors and implementing organisations. In 2013 the programme was active in Cameroon, Mozambique and Nigeria. In November 2013 UAFC was awarded the public private partnership award, to celebrate successful partnerships between the Dutch government, private sector and non governmental organisations.

This Case Study was a background briefing for Oxfam Novib's 2013 Annual Review, prepared in partnership with Rutgers WPF, i+solutions, the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and describes the programme in Cameroon, Mozambique and Nigeria. Although it is not a formal evaluation it does consider lessons learned by both Oxfam Novib and its partner organisations.

These Case Studies are shared in the form in which they were submitted, often written by partners whose first language is not English, and have not been edited since submission. We believe that the meaning is clear enough, and the authenticity of the reporting and the availability of Southern Voices on development makes their inclusion in the Oxfam iLibrary worthwhile for sharing with external readers.

**Programme Partners: Rutgers WPF, i+solutions, the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

# AIM OF THE PROJECT

Access to sexual and reproductive health is a universal right. Globally, there are around 34 million people living with HIV, half of which are women. In addition, there are 200 million women worldwide that would like to use modern contraceptives, but do not have access to this. Furthermore, the majority of women and girls (especially in developing countries) are still unable to negotiate condom use with their partners, while they should be able to freely decide about their own sexuality and the spacing of their children. Female condoms potentially give women a greater sense of control over their sexual and reproductive health and have an enormous potential to address problems of inadequate access to family planning and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. However, universal access to female condoms is not a given.

They are not or insufficiently included in condom programmes of major institutions such as UNFPA and major donors such as USAID. Donors, international organizations and governments in the Global South are hindered by a lack of awareness, knowledge and motivation concerning the potential of female condoms. In addition, many large-scale SRHR implementing organizations still lack the skills and motivation for scaling-up or starting female condom programmes.

The UAFC advocacy component directs targeted advocacy messages to convince donors and large institutions that female condoms should be included, procured and programmed so that women and men will have access to a choice of affordable female condoms.

## CONTEXT

This case study will focus on the advocacy component of the UAFC programme, which is aimed to increase choice and financial and political support for female condoms amongst donors and implementers. Access to female condoms is far from universal and for a long time there was only one female condom available, the FC2. Female condoms are also often not included in family planning or HIV programmes. UAFC advocates for more female condoms to enter the international market to give women more choice. More available designs on the international female market will increase competition which will drive down the (procurement price) of female condoms. With more competition manufacturers are stimulated to improve their products. More choice will also lead to more uptake as women have different preferences and would like to use different methods and condom design in the course of their lives. The UAFC programme advocates the need for more choice, procurement, distribution and programming towards a score of large international actors because they have the ability to accelerate progress towards this under-utilized and under-valued commodity.

Advocacy is directed towards main actors that include the UN Secretary General Initiative Every Woman Every Child, bilateral donors, UNFPA, UNAIDS, World Health Organization (WHO), Private Foundations, Governments, large NGOs, social marketing organizations, SRHR implementing organizations and female condom manufacturers. UAFC advocates are present at high level and strategic meetings such as the Women Deliver Conference, UNAIDS Programme Coordination Board Meetings, Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition Annual General Meeting, the Family Planning, Social Marketing and Social Franchise Conference and SOA-HIV-SEKS Conference.

Large international institutions and donors have to some extent included female condoms in their policies, programmes and budgets but still a lot of work needs to be done to ensure that female condoms are put side by side to male condoms in procurement so as to increase their availability.

Over the years, our work has contributed to the fact that some major institutions and big-time procurers of female condoms such as UNFPA and USAID have become much more open and positive towards female condoms.

UAFC has become a reliable neutral partner and has been invited to participate in different working and technical groups to influence global initiatives such as the Family Planning 2020 initiative, and the UN Commission on Life-saving Commodities (UNCoLSC), the latter have included female condoms as an affordable and effective, but under-funded and under-utilized life-saving commodity.

UAFC has contributed/ influenced the process leading up to the final list of the life-saving commodities.

Since the start of the UAFC programme we have reached out to different stakeholders to become member of the international advocacy platform. UAFC is the secretariat of this platform and keeps members involved with relevant information. Sign-on letters for joint advocacy are sent, for example to the Belinda and Bill Gates Foundation to plead for making funding available for in-country comprehensive female condom programming.

Next to the work at the global level, it is equally important to advocate for female condoms at the local level. Inclusion of female condoms in the plans of the local governments is crucial for creating a sustainable environment for female condoms. In the UAFC country programmes of Nigeria, Cameroon and Mozambique, local advocacy organizations have been identified to direct advocacy efforts to local organizations and government institutions to include female condoms in their policies, programmes and budget lines.

Next to targeted advocacy, visibility in (social) media is important, UAFC uses twitter and facebook and has reached out to numerous media in the Global South as well as in the Netherlands.

ONL got involved in this work as ONL supports women and girls' rights to autonomy and self determination in the areas of sexuality and reproduction. ONL believes that strengthening individual awareness, knowledge and self esteem can reinforce the agency of women and girls, encouraging and supporting movement building to claim their rights, bringing the issue to national and international agendas.

The UAFC programme further supports the work in the field of HIV/AIDS, therefore women and girls will be able to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies and HIV infections.

To really change the international female condom market a comprehensive approach was needed, that is why ONL together with Rutgers WPF, i+solutions as well as the Netherlands' Ministry for Foreign Affairs decided to join forces and set up the Universal Access to Female Condoms (UAFC) Joint Programme to implement an innovative and holistic approach. The programme works at three levels, that of ensuring availability and affordability of female condoms, that of creating sustained demand and national and international advocacy. The three levels strengthen each other and are implemented concurrently.

## METHODOLOGY

### Theory of change of the UAFC Joint Programme

Access to female condoms is hindered by a lack of availability, affordability and variety in the global market as well as for end users. In addition, new female condom types need to comply with international and national quality standards, in order to be accepted for distribution.

Demand for and sustained use of different types of female condoms is hindered by lack of knowledge about female condoms, lack of skills regarding how to use them or negotiate their use with one's partner, and by prejudices and socio-cultural barriers with end users and community gate keepers. In addition, local SRHR organisations and public and private health providers often lack the knowledge and skills for female condom programming and distribution.

International and national (financial and political) support for sustained female condom procurement, programming, manufacturing and regulatory support, and advocacy is hindered by a lack of awareness, knowledge and motivation on the part of donors, international organisations and governments in the Global South about the potential of female condoms. In addition, many large-scale SRHR implementing organisations still lack the skills and motivation for scaling up or starting female condom programmes.

## Overall Programme Objectives

The UAFC Joint Programme has formulated three overall programme objectives (OPOs) for the period 2012-2015:

The overall programme objective for advocacy is formulated in OPO 3: increased – financial and political – support from global and local policy makers, donors and implementing organizations for female condom procurement, programming<sup>1</sup>, research & development and advocacy, referred to as *“increased international and national support”*.

Under this overall objective, the UAFC Joint Programme implements the following strategies:

- Address gaps in female condom knowledge by commissioning studies and research;
- Advocate towards partners and allies in UAFC target countries to integrate female condoms in existing SRHR programmes and services;
- Strengthen national female condom advocacy in UAFC country programmes and make advocacy part and parcel of UAFC country programmes.
- Increase awareness and support for female condoms among high-level stakeholders, decision makers and opinion leaders by presenting them with up-to-date information and evidence-based advocacy messages
- Make female condom advocacy a sustainable part of advocacy strategies of international SRHR, HIV/AIDS and women’s organisations
- Advocate towards large implementing organisations to start or scale-up female condom programmes
- Capacitate large implementing organisations to engage in female condom programming
- Increase awareness and support for female condoms among large scale SRHR-implementing organisations through increased media coverage on female condom programming
- Mobilise the International Female Condom Platform to support and participate in international advocacy activities
- Increase awareness and support for female condoms among the media

### **In-country and international advocacy activities are:**

#### **National level**

- Advocacy visits to relevant key stakeholders
- Identification of existing networks and work with them to promote female condoms
- Participate in state and national for a and events to promote visibility of female condom programming
- Support the implementation of a joint female condom advocacy plan with stakeholders
- Organise a forum for National Advisory Committees to mainstream female condoms into national SRHR programmes
- Participate in joint advocacy visits to policy makers for policy review
- Participate at and provide support to national for a / conferences on HIV/AID and SRHR to promote female condoms
- Support advocacy meetings with key groups at focal states and national level to build synergy
- Review of female condom materials

#### **International level**

- Monitor policy developments of donors and key stakeholders
- Formulate advocacy evidence-based messages and sign-on letters
- Get female condoms on the agenda of relevant high-level meetings
- Contribute to Female Condom Community UNConLSC
- Connect grass root with international policy level
- Prepare regular updates to the international advocacy platform
- Distribute advocacy toolkits among potential advocates

- Identify media outlets
- Advocate towards implementing SRHR organizations (MSI, IPPF, PAI and others) for more pro-active engagement in female condom advocacy towards donors and international organizations
- Support in-country advocates to work on strategic plan
- Develop advocacy workshops and trainings

## HUMAN RESOURCES

The advocacy part of the UAFC consortium is implemented by Rutgers WPF (1,5 FTE advocacy officers) and 1 full time communication officer. The manager of the Rutgers WPF advocacy team is member of the UAFC International Steering Group. In-country advocacy in Nigeria, Cameroon is done by FESADE in Cameroon, and ARFH and EVA in Nigeria. Rutgers WPF holds the sub-contracts for these organizations. Since 2013, Forum Mulher (long standing ONL partner and renowned women's network organization) leads the female condom programme in Mozambique.

The role of Oxfam Novib is that of contract manager, ON holds the contracts with the back donors and with the implementing consortium partners, in this instance Rutgers WPF, ON provides clear lines of accountability towards the partners and ensures that all donor requirements as laid down in the contracts are carried out.

## RESULTS

During the first phase of the UAFC programme (2009 – 2011) advocacy has resulted in positive changes at country levels such as the successful inclusion of female condom Champions in the promotion among the general public. At international level donors are increasingly looking into possibilities to include female condoms in their policies and programmes. More concretely: An International Advocacy Platform was set up, now consisting of over 113 members, representing a wide range of organisations and nationalities. This has led to increased collaboration, coordination and synergy between public and civil society stakeholders.

Targeted international advocacy increased visibility of and attention for female condoms, resulting in placing female condoms (higher) on the international agenda, the inclusion of female condoms in policy documents (e.g. UNAIDS, PEPFAR) and a shift in position of the UNFPA and WHO towards acknowledgement of the need for variety in female condom distribution and programming.

Advocacy efforts led to decreased scepticism surrounding female condoms and the UAFC Joint Programme has become a well known brand in itself. We are seen as neutral coalition, a public/private partnership that is not aligned to any particular manufacturer, the UAFC Joint Programme as a respected broker capable of bringing parties together.

Because of our position, members of the Female Condom Technical Reference Team of the UN Commission on Life Saving Commodities (UNCoLSC) have provided input into the UAFC female condom product brief and roadmap for demand creation.

Detailed information on female condoms and the UAFC approach have been included in the UNCoLSC advocacy toolkit, and female condoms have been integrated in the country plans of the so-called 'pathfinding' countries under the UNCoLSC.

**For the work on international and national advocacy, the UAFC Joint Programme aims at achieving the following outcomes by the end of the programme period:**

- At least two donor agencies and international organisations that have included female condoms in relevant policies, budget lines and programmes

### **Progress towards the outcome**

The UNFPA has shifted its position vis-à-vis female condoms and have donated 4 million female condoms to the country programme in Nigeria and 500,000 to the country programme in Cameroon. Large donors e.g. DFID released funding to support distribution of 17 million female condoms (DFID annual report 2012).

- At least two in-country advocates have advocated successfully for inclusion of female condoms in relevant Southern government policies, budget lines and programmes

### **Progress towards the outcome**

Advocacy partners in Cameroon and Nigeria have been identified and they have both set up a national female condom forum/platform. In Cameroon a national budget line of 30 million Franc CFA (approx. Euro 45,000) for female condoms was realized.

- At least three donor agencies and international organisations willing to support the country programmes of the UAFC Joint Programme

### **Progress towards the outcome**

Currently, UAFC is organising a key stakeholder workshop (funded by Sharenet) in Bangladesh to discuss the potential for a female condom programme there. The outcome of the workshop would be a pilot female condom programme in Bangladesh, working together with local and international organisations. This pilot would serve as an example for donors to support scale-up of female condom programmes in the Asia region.

### **Progress towards the outcome**

Interest for female condom programming amongst IPPF, PSI and MSI is increasing through continued dialogue. Explicit agreement has been expressed by IPPF and PSI on the need for more pro-active female condom advocacy and making it an integral part of policies and programmes.

## **IMPACT**

Targeted advocacy has contributed to a more positive female condom climate at the international level: for instance female condoms were selected as one of the life-saving commodities by the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities, this means that governments can now prioritize female condoms within this programme and make them available for the population. The UNFPA and DFID have shifted their position vis-à-vis female condoms and have donated substantially to female condoms.

## **SUCCESSSES & FAILURES**

### **Successes**

Despite the results achieved in the first phase, and the slowly changing international climate, there is still a clear need for more female condom advocacy. But female condoms are now on the international agenda during high level meetings and some donors are less sceptic and show a slow positive change in their attitude towards female condoms. UAFC is accepted as a knowledgeable broker and we have been able to influence the UNCoLSC process.

## Failures

Despite progress made and a shift in attitude and support from large institutions such as the UNFPA, major donor organisations such as the Gates Foundation remain sceptical towards female condoms and have not yet made funding available. Visible support from large influential donors working on HIV and SRHR would make it possible to scale up the work and make female condoms universally available and affordable.

## LESSONS LEARNED

During the second phase of the programme we have included national advocacy organizations in the country programmes as direct advocacy towards national governments is key, the work done at the national level, feeds the advocacy messages at the global level and vice versa. The connection between national and international levels have been strengthened by supporting participation of local advocates in international advocacy efforts and supporting local advocates to translate outcomes of international advocacy for national advocacy purposes.

## HUMAN INTEREST

Video on female condom peer to peer education:

This is an award winning video ('Female condoms are my power, my protection, my pleasure' made by UAFC partner Pathfinder in Mozambique. A young girl explains the importance of sex education in her life, a young men shares why and how he inspires his peers to use female condoms. More information about the female condom programme can be found on our website.



## READ ON ...

<http://condoms4all.org/>

<http://www.iplussolutions.org/project/uafc>

<http://www.rutgers.international/programmes/universal-access-female-condoms>

<http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/pub/projects/improving-womens-sexual-health-and-choices.html>

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Female condom programming is used here next to procurement to refer to a comprehensive set of activities essential for creating demand for, and enabling correct use of, female condoms, such as distribution, promotion, awareness-raising, interpersonal communication, training and advocacy towards local gatekeepers and decision makers.



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